

Guyn's Mill Complex
Mundy's Landing and Pauls Mill Roads
Troy Vicinity
Woodford County
Kentucky

HAER No. KY-1

HAER
KY
120-TROY.V.
2-

~~PHOTOGRAPHS~~

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: Mundy's Landing and Pauls Mill Roads
Troy Vicinity
Woodford County
Kentucky

Present Owner: Mrs. Catherine Guyn Leedy
516 Southland Drive
Versailles, Kentucky 40383

Present Use: Abandoned

Significance: This is a reasonably intact 19th century
rural industrial complex that includes a
sawmill, a grist mill and a blacksmith shop.

Transmitted by: Kevin Murphy, Historian HAER, 1984; from
data compiled by Stephen C. Gordon, 1983

The Guyn's Mill Historic District is significant in representing an intact, visually cohesive nineteenth century family operated agricultural-industrial complex in Kentucky. Guyn's Mill conveys a visual sense of the self-contained, small scale nature of Kentucky's early rural industrial economy.¹ Technologically, the mill buildings reflect a significant shift from water powered to steam powered industry. The water powered sawmill was built c. 1840-1850 along plans strikingly similar to those designed by Oliver Evans. It also is the only documented water powered sawmill which still survives in Kentucky.

Prior to the establishment of an urban-industrial economy, flour and lumber processing ranked not only as Woodford County's chief manufacturing operation but as Kentucky's as well. In 1860, for example, over 960 grist and sawmills were in production across the State, with a total capital investment exceeding three million dollars. Only the tobacco industry employed more people. The importance of the grist and lumber milling industry can be furthered by examining its context in the national economy.²

The location of Guyn's Mill is the result of several advantages which the original owners exploited--a good location near the rich farmland of the Inner Bluegrass, an abundant supply of virgin hardwood timber, and most important, a narrow valley watered by several small streams. Furthermore, Guyn's Mill and southern Woodford County are strategically positioned along the early trade routes between Lexington, Mundy's Landing, and Harrodsburg.

In 1784 Robert Guyn (1744-1818), a native of Augusta County, Virginia, came to Kentucky with his wife and three children. Shortly thereafter the Guyn family moved into a remote area of southern Woodford County that later was referred to as "Clover Bottom." The 1792 Woodford County Tax Assessor's List shows that Robert Gwinn [sic] owned 500 acres, 5 horses, and 22 cattle, which certainly was a large holding for this early date. Guyn and Robert Black, another pioneer settler, subsequently built a two-story log structure which is believed to be Black's Station. It may have been built for Robert Guyn, Jr. (1774-1844), who in 1796 married Jane Black, daughter of Robert Black. Robert and Jane Black Guyn had 14 children and 68 grandchildren, many of whom married members of the Black family.³

Although historical and biographical references do not specify exact place of residence, evidence suggests that Robert Guyn III (1796-1850) may have built the log structures which now comprise the rear ell of the William Guyn House (See HABS-KY-97). In 1802 Robert Guyn, Jr. had built a handsome stone house on land east of Mundy's Landing Road, so it would seem unlikely that he had lived in the log house south of Clear Creek. After Guyn's death in 1844, several members of the family distributed the property into individual tracts, at which time Adam Rankin Guyn (1821-1895) acquired 107 acres along the south bank of Clear Creek and west of Mundy's Landing Road. Adam Guyn then sold his inheritance to his brother William Guyn (1809-1887). Sometime during this period Adam Rankin or William Guyn added the Greek Revival wing onto the existing log house. An unpaid bill in Robert Guyn's inventory (1844) presents

the possibility that John McMurtry, a Lexington architect-builder, may have been involved in the design of the Greek Revival house. Equally intriguing is the possibility that the finished lumber employed in building the house may have been furnished by Guyn's own sawmill.⁴

The rectangular plan, waterpowered sawmill appears to have been built by the Guyn family sometime during the 1840's. The plans and arrangement of the sawmill may have been patterned after plans specified by Oliver Evans, a noted Philadelphia millwright. While a mill is referred to in an 1847 property conveyance, none of the manufacturing census from 1840 to 1870 enumerate a mill by Robert or William Guyn. However, the 1861 map of Woodford County does indicate a sawmill at this location.⁵

The establishment of a sawmill on Clear Creek served as a catalyst for further improvements, as evidenced by the construction of a blacksmith's shop and miller's residence. By the early 1870's William Rankin Guyn (1839-1927) expanded his father's operation by building a steam powered grist mill and in 1874 a general store. While the general store has long since been demolished, the grist mill still stands between Clear Creek and the blacksmith's shop. Census records indicate that in 1880 there were a total of 10 grist mills in Woodford County, and of the 5 enumerated in Clover Bottom, only Guyn's mill was steam powered.⁶

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the mill complex was managed by William, Raymond, and Robert Guyn. Around 1920 the mill ceased operation as farmers marketed their grain in the larger towns. Eventually the property passed onto Mrs. Catherine Guyn Leedy (1893-), who currently is residing in Versailles. Her grandson, Robert Brandenburg, is the eighth generation of Guyns living on the family estate. He currently is farming the property and managing it for his grandmother. He plans on restoring the William Guyn house and making it his family residence.

Within the Guyn's Mill Complex are a Greek Revival residence with barns and dependencies, a late eighteenth century log dwelling, a log and frame blacksmith shop, miller's residence, and the mill complex located on both sides of Clear Creek. The industrial complex consists of a mid-nineteenth century sawmill with original works, a later three story steam powered grist mill, and the ruins of a bridge with stone piers. The entire grouping of structures is situated along the East Fork of Clear Creek, a tributary of the nearby Kentucky River. The William Guyn House is located on a shallow hillside which overlooks the sawmill and creek bottom meadow.

The historic mill complex is situated a short distance northeast of the Guyn House along the banks of the creek. A bridge that formerly connected the sawmill to Paul's Mill Road has long since vanished, although the ramp and stone piers are still in place. The Guyn Sawmill is sited on the south bank of the creek immediately east of the bridge ramp. It is a rectangular plan, braced frame structure measuring approximately 15' x 45'. The raised limestone foundation is dry laid with several of the original bays having historic

infill. A crude rubble limestone ramp, which appears to post-date the mill, permitted grade access to the south elevation. Structurally, the mill is a mortise and tenon, adze beam framed structure consisting of three heavy bents and pole rafters. The center bent also serves as the base of the saw. The clapboard is non-historic and probably obscures many of the original bays. Originally logs were brought through the west elevation with the finished planks and lumber exiting the structure through the east end. Water channeled down the headrace was introduced into the lower level of the mill, where it turned the wheel which in turn cranked the pitman. The motion of the pitman was engineered so as to power the 6" sawblade in an up-and-down motion. In this particular mill the saw, carriage, and fender posts are in situ on the upper level. Portions of the wheel and gear mechanisms are still located in the lower level.

A slight distance downstream and on the opposite side of Clear Creek is the Guyn Grist Mill, a steam powered, 2-1/2 story structure built circa 1870-1880. Measuring 40' x 30', the mill is constructed of massive tenoned beams which frame the circular sawn rafters and joists. Wall treatment is twentieth century clapboard, and none of the window sashes survive. A 12-1/2 foot wide grain crib is an early addition to the east elevation. The foundation is ashlar cut Kentucky limestone with stone piers. Two large millstones are in situ on the first floor. Although considerably deteriorated, many of the sifters, blowers, and augers are in place. In the half basement are housed large wooden gears and the cog wheel which were powered by a steam engine located outside the west elevation. The steam engine was manufactured by the Ainslie Cochran & Company and is attached to a wrought iron boiler made by the I. & E. Greenwald Company of Cincinnati. Both apparatus are surrounded by a limestone wall that previously supported a protective structure.

Directly opposite the grist mill on Paul's Mill Road is the Guyn Blacksmith Shop, a 1-1/2 story log and balloon frame building believed to have been built by W. R. Guyn. The west section of the building is a 22' x 18' single pen log structure with inverted V notch construction. The chinking is a mixture of clay and limestone, although most of it has been removed from the front wall. At the western end of the log pen is the masonry blacksmith's forge. Furring strips nailed onto the logs may have been added at an early date. The unfinished log notching on the rear east ell suggests the frame compartment is contemporary or an early afterthought. Its lightly framed construction consists of down braces and exposed studs on the interior. Similarly, the interior log walls are exposed and do not appear to have been sided or whitewashed. However, all of the exterior clapboard is contemporary with the other mill buildings. Of particular interest is the massive stone slab along the front entrance.

Footnotes:

- 1) Kentucky Historic Resources Survey, Computer File.
- 2) U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1850; Manufacturing, Vol. 3, pp. 191-195.
- 3) Woodford County Tax Records, 1792; Chronology of the Guyn and Black Families.
- 4) Woodford County Courthouse, Deed Book S, Page 557; Will Book N., Pages 540-543.
- 5) E. A. and G. W. Hewitt, Atlas Map of Woodford County, Kentucky, 1861.
- 6) F. A. Battey and W. H. Perrin, eds., Kentucky, A History of the State, pp. 792-793; U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Special Schedule on Manufacturers.

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Information provided by Catherine Guyn Leedy, March 1980.